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THE LITTLE MARSHAL
AND OTHER POEMS

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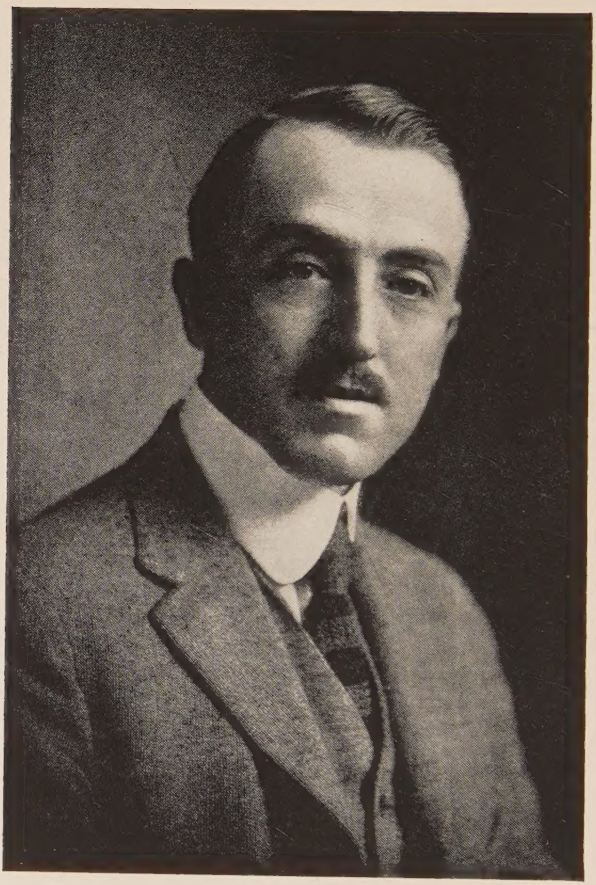

OWEN E. McGILLICUDDY

THE LITTLE MARSHAL

AND OTHER POEMS

By

OWEN E. McGILLICUDDY

With an Introduction by

JOSEPH T. CLARK

FREDERICK D. GOODCHILD
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TO MY WIFE

For the privilege of reprinting the poems included in this volume the author thanks the editors of *Chamber's Journal, The Pall Mall Magazine, Leslie's Weekly, The National Monthly, Everybody's Magazine, The Overland Monthly, MacLean's Magazine, Everywoman's World, The Canadian Magazine, The Canadian Home Journal,* and *The Khaki Call.*

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INTRODUCTION

This little volume is made up of verse written during the past dozen years or so by Owen E. McGillicuddy and contributed at different times to various Canadian, American and British magazines. These are the casual outside writings of a busy newspaperman, and while there is nothing pretentious about them, they possess a merit that gives them real value, and, in some cases, a strength and beauty out of the ordinary.

Owen E. McGillicuddy was born in Goderich, Ontario, May 21st, 1887, where his father, the late Daniel McGillicuddy, for twenty-five years owned and edited the *Goderich Signal.* In 1902, when his father sold his newspaper in Goderich and went to Ottawa to become Director of Publicity in the Department of the Interior, Owen completed his education at the Ottawa Collegiate Institute and matriculated to McGill University, and in 1905 entered the Civil Service as Associate Editor of the *Analytical Index* to Hansard—not just the sort of literary occupation, one would suppose, that a young poet would be fond of.

In December of the next year he resigned this post

to go West to Calgary with his father to found *The Calgary Daily News,* now known as the *Calgary Canadian.* He was one of the original members of the Calgary Canadian Club. After *The Calgary News* had been disposed of in the Fall of 1910 he returned from the West, was for a short time on the advertising staff of *The Toronto News,* later in the same year joining the business staff of *The Star,* with which paper he has since been connected, latterly on the editorial staff. On October 28th, 1915, he was married in Toronto to Miss Blanche Dunham, only daughter of Mrs. Ellen B. Dunham of Toronto.

At intervals, during these comings and goings, the verses in this little volume have been written and published in a wide list of magazines, and now, in response to the persuasions of his friends, Mr. McGillicuddy has brought them together in this form and offers them to the public, and to the public it affords me pleasure to commend the volume.

September, 1918.

J. T. Clark.

THE LITTLE MARSHAL AND OTHER POEMS

SPIRIT of France embodied in one man,
Gladly we follow wheresoe'er you go;
We have been with you since the fight began,
And now with faith and hope we face the foe.

WAR POEMS

LE PETIT MARECHAL

A prophetic tribute to the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies in France.

SPIRIT of France embodied in one man,
Gladly we follow wheresoe'er you go;
We have been with you since the fight began,
And now with faith and hope we face the foe.

Dark skies have frowned upon us in past years,
Yet have we prayed for strength to meet each hour;
Now, when our needs are keener felt than tears,
We choose the man to unify our power.

Though strife goes on as if it ne'er would end,
While Death walks faster o'er the weary land,
Yet still in him round whom our colors blend,
We feel the cause has found a guiding hand.

So when the days of triumph shall appear
And our proud banners make their last advance,
A free world's voice will hail in accents clear
The gallant son of an immortal France!

THE SONS OF CÆSAR SERVE

A tribute to the gallant Italian armies who have overcome almost insuperable obstacles during the present great conflict.

FROM mountain peak to mountain peak
Methought I heard a swelling song,
A song that cheered the small and weak,
From hearts that sought to right a wrong:

We are the sons of Cæsar,
The sons of a nobler Rome;
We fight to conquer Freedom's foe,
We strive that all the world may know
The blood of Cæsar
Still doth flow
Through veins of those who joyful go
To strike a strong and mighty blow—
The sons of Cæsar serve.

We are the sons of Cæsar,
The sons of a nobler Rome;
Our storied past hath taught us well,
And while midst sound of shot and shell
The blood of Cæsar
Still doth tell;
God keep us from the wiles of hell,
And savage boastings help us quell—
The sons of Cæsar serve.

We are the sons of Cæsar,
  The sons of a nobler Rome;
May all the world be some day free
From pain and guilt and misery;
  The blood of Cæsar
  Calls on Thee,
Once nailèd to the shameful tree,
Lord Jesu see our agony—
  The sons of Cæsar serve.

A MUNITIONETTE SPEAKS

YES, it's hard, hard work,
Yet why should I shirk,
The call of the hungry guns
Would it seem quite fair
To our lads over there,
Who have left us to fight the Huns?

If my poor head aches,
And my back near breaks,
And my hands get rough and sore—
What is that to me,
When in dreams I can see
How our men bear the scourge of war!

No! I will not mind,
I shall leave behind
All thought of what used to be:
There's work to be done,
Before victory's won—
And the guns must be fed by me.

So with lathe and wheel,
I will shape my steel,
And forget those peaceful years;
I shall work at shells—
For each one of them tells—
And my sweat it shall ease my tears.

EARL KITCHENER

Lost at sea, June 5th, 1916.

NO marble shaft shall mark you where he lies,
Nor epitaph announce aloud his fame,
But in the hearts of men will last the name
Of him whom Freedom called to high emprise.

O man of sober mien and patient poise,
You did what others thought or talked about:
You worked and served, with honors or without,
Nor recked the blame of demagogic noise.

You died as you had lived—on duty bound—
And while without you shall the work be done,
Still, we had hoped that Europe's cause had won
Before grim Death his summons had to sound.

Yet, when the fairer days on England dawn,
May busy hours not lead us to forget
That all mankind do owe to you a debt—
That, after stern debate, your work went on.

VERSE FOR HUMBLE HOMES

COMFORT

THERE are four things—
And each one brings
A pleasure more than any king's,
With thoughts both sweet and tender—

A fire to poke,
A pipe to smoke,
A little curly head to stroke,
And four feet on a fender.

A FATHER'S SONG

To a Little Toddler.

OHO, My Little Toddler,
I hear your eager feet
Scampering over mother's floor,
With childish joy complete.

Oho, My Little Toddler,
Too soon the years will show
Footpaths seldom are as smooth
As those on which you go.

Yet, O, My Little Toddler,
I would not have you barred
From all the great adventure
Of finding roads so hard.

Still, O, My Little Toddler,
If lost you e'er should be,
May some one show the pathway
When you are far from me!

THE BED BACK HOME

I CAN see it again as once it stood,
With its fresh white spread and its old dark wood,
Ah, 'twas there that one slept as all of us should,
Upstairs on a bed at home.

With childish fancy our castles we built
While Mother crooned us a lullaby lilt,
As her tired hands tucked in the old crazy quilt,
Upstairs on a bed at home.

And when, all tired out with our boyhood's play,
We wearily climbed at end of the day—
We knew the one place where the big comfort lay,
Upstairs on a bed at home.

Yet now when the worries of life annoy,
Somehow and sometimes we miss the old joy,
We sigh for the sleep of a certain small boy,
Upstairs on a bed at home.

A SONG FOR GRANDFATHER

Written after seeing my uncle, Mr. Thomas McGillicuddy, give his little grand-daughter, Eleanor, a ride on his knee.

"I LOVE 'ou, love 'ou, love 'ou,
Doodness! How I love 'ou."
—That's what daughter
Sings to me,
As she rides upon my knee,
Just as happy as can be,
In the charming hours of childhood.

"I love 'ou, love 'ou, love 'ou,
Doodness! How I love 'ou."
—Days are passing:
Very soon
Girlies cease at last to croon,
But still I hear that elfin tune
When the birds sing in the wildwood.

"I love 'ou, love 'ou, love 'ou,
Doodness! How I love 'ou."
—Back the old words
Come to me:
Someone else is on my knee,
Just as mother used to be,
In the charming hours of childhood.

THE DESERTED SCHOOLHOUSE

IT stands forsaken near the road,
The schoolhouse that I used to know,
And holds unbroken through the years
Its mem'ries of the long ago,
The ceilings drop long cobwebs gray,
The door's old hinges creak and groan;
But ghosts of childhood days live there,
And hear the oldtime hum and drone.

The sun looks through the windows dim,
As if to watch some task or game;
The wind slips o'er the benches old,
And stirs the dust on some carved name.
The wide crack still is in the floor
That once kept straight our restless feet;
How hard it was to read and spell
When summer's heart-strings softly beat!

When shadows sit at battered desks,
And moonbeams pale peer through the gloom,
Faint echoes from the voices gone
May whisper softly in the room;
Faint echoes from our merry songs,
Or some far-off forgotten prayer,
May rise or fall like dying breath
Upon the silence brooding there.

THE DREAMS OF OTHER DAYS

HOW oft, how oft, we know not why,
There comes unbid, with heart-born sigh—
With mystic yearning, fraught with tears—
From out the mist-enchanted years,
The vision of a vanished life
That for a moment meets the gaze
Beyond the realm of mortal strife—
A dream, a dream of other days.

A breath, a note, a whispered song,
Amid the world's discordant throng:
And lo! the soul in fond rejoice
Calls back to earth a once-loved voice,
A voice once heard—but where, ah where,
Amid life's dark, forgotten ways?
Alas, it dies upon the air—
A dream, a dream of other days.

And now, as in a vision near,
There comes a form, an image clear;
A face, a dear remembered face;
A loving hand in love's embrace;
'Tis but the murmur of a stream,
A shadow in the twilight haze
That wakes within the heart a dream—
A dream, a dream of other days.

THE QUIET FRIEND

O GIVE me a book
At the end of the day
When mortals seek their rest,
Where the mind may look
And those rare thoughts stray
Far away
From a world opprest.

WESTERN VERSE

TO THE MEN WHO LOSE

A toast to all those who have put fortune to the test in a righteous cause, and, through no fault of their own, have tasted the bitter dregs of defeat.

HERE'S to the men who lose!
What though their work be ne'er so nobly planned
And watched with jealous care,
No glorious halo crowns their efforts grand
—Contempt is failure's share.

Here's to the men who lose!
If Triumph's easy smile our struggles greet,
Courage is easy then;
The king is he, who, after fierce defeat,
Can up and fight again.

Here's to the men who lose!
The ready plaudits of a fawning world
Ring sweet in victor's ears;
The Vanquished's banners never are unfurled—
For them there sound no cheers.

Here's to the men who lose!
The touchstone of true worth is not success:
There is a higher test—
Though Fate may darkly frown, onward to press,
And bravely do one's best.

Here's to the men who lose!
It is the Vanquished's praises that I sing,
And this the toast I choose:
A hard-fought failure is a noble thing—
Here's to the men who lose!

THE DROUGHT

A RED-MOUTHED reptile by whose fiery tongue
The fields are licked of green, the orchards stung,
The pastures burned as with a blighting brand,
Swept back and forth across the heated land;
Whose touch is poison, and whose tortuous tread
Sets quivering all the withering earth with dread;
A grim, slow-moving monster, whose hot breath
Enkindles Desolation, Famine, Death.

IN THE OPEN

HERE'S what I love—the blue sky above
And the wide clear space,
The mounting plain, the guiding rein,
The wind in my face.

To ride and ride, where the land spreads wide
To the darkening hills,
In a splendid race to the open place,
And the life that fills.

To ride and to rest on the hill's high crest,
Under open sky;
And to sleep without fear, where the stars are near,
And God close by.

THE PRAYER OF A PLOWMAN

St. Luke ix. 62.—"No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom."

KEEP me from turning back!
My hand is on the plow, my faltering hand;
But all in front of me is untilled land,
The wilderness and solitary place,
The lonely desert and its interspace—
Dread husbandry. And for the years of pain
What harvest comes to me? My meed of grain,
These dwindling husks, a handful of dry corn,
These poor lean stalks. My courage is outworn.
O Lord,
Keep me from turning back!

A NIGHT IN THE ROCKIES

THE western torches flicker low
And with declining beauty flare;
In crimson tints the embers glow
And quell their former garish glare.

One moment gleams the fleeting fire,
And then to ashes cold and gray,
The sunset embers fade, expire,—
An eventide has passed away.

From out the eastern gloom are sent
Faint splashes of a far-off light
Till fiery glows the firmament
Against the chasmy realms of night.

Into the west these gleams advance,
With shiny points mark off the gloom;
Till glimmer o'er the full expanse
Star-candles on a kindled dome.

Then o'er the dim horizon line
The bold moon peeps with beaming face,
In homage now the star-hosts shine
More softly, with a modest grace.

So till the nightly watch is spent
These spangling lights abide and burn;
And, making darkness eloquent,
Await the exiled sun's return.

OCCASIONAL VERSE

AH, our eyes are ever turning,
Filled with some unfathomed yearning,
Turning back along the pathway where time flings its mellow haze;
And we count the frets and sighing,
In the silence unreplying,
In the silence that has fallen over all our yesterdays.

Memory would fain be bringing
Echoes of our golden singing,
Bring us melodies that cheered us when the light was on the wane;
But our senses always falter
At some old deserted altar
Where we sacrificed to sorrow and to bitterness and pain.

Step by step we foot the highways,
Or we fare along the byways
Where the shadows were the longest and the path was rough and steep;
And we catch the sound of sobbing
Through the mystic stillness throbbing
And we wonder what of happiness our yesterdays may keep.

But the morrows beckon to us,
Call us from the paths that knew us,
Lure us on with smiles and sunshine down new roadways broad and fair;
And they coax us with the promise
That they never will take from us
All the goodness and the gladness that we thought we lost back there.

Then with fingers swift and certain
We draw close the velvet curtain
That swings down across the present in the sunset's golden haze;
And we turn to our to-morrows
That still sweetness from the sorrows
Which we thought were sent to sadden all our golden yesterdays.

THE ADMONITION

A WORKMAN scoffed one day at toil;
Rebellion grew on ready soil;

For he had dreamed of wealthy yields
In fair but far-off harvest fields.

And each stern hour had pressed him sore
But now, at last, he said—"No more."

Yet, hardly had the words been said
Than selfish thoughts had from him fled,

A still small voice bade striving cease,
And, as it spoke, his soul found peace.

For, gently as a mother's kiss,
He heard a Saviour tell him this:

"Son, know ye that they do their part
Who feel the ache yet cheer the heart.

"Thy tools may dig a grave for thee
Or build a fortress men can see.

"That life counts most which seeks to lift—
That gives its all lest others drift.

"Think kinder thoughts and it shall be
A greater strength will come to thee,

"For he who helps his brother man
Has done the best for Me he can."

THE WEALTH OF NATURE'S SON

THE summer winds blow soft across the hay;
The scent of gardens lingers in the air;
The robins fluting wood-notes sing a lay
Of clouds with lining silvered, free from care.
The orchards and the meadows, pink and white,
The deep-greened verdure of a tree's first bloom,
The ripened fruit, unfolding to the light,—
Reflect their mellowed joy from Nature's womb.

Through fields of virgin, bending, golden grain,
Through byways o'er a path of stubble straw,
Through railèd fence and down a shady lane,
By forests, brooklets, hedges, thorned and raw,
Through sunny days and days of darkened hopes,
Through life's rough journey to the other shore,
Through blackened ashes up to shining slopes,—
God keeps the farmer from the City's poor.

WORK

SO stern he seemed, and grave and sober-wise,
This friend of serious mien and patient eyes;
I teased him oftentimes by jest and smile,
That he should be so earnest all the while.

Yet now, when life grows harsh and sad and drear,
And quondam friends grow laggard, insincere,
With him alone I find my blest release
From care—in deep forgetfulness and peace.

THE DEEDS MEN DO

LITTLE by little
We learn each day,
That helping another
On his way
Is the biggest thing
We all can do,
As this old world
We go travelling through.

THE TALE OF THE YEARS

SUMMER and winter and spring,
Heat and the cold and the rain—
This is the tale the years bring,
Blessing and bane.
Labor and reaping that's sweet,
Twilight and day and the night,
Seed and the soil and the wheat,
Darkness and light.
God made His earth for man,
Home for a little span.

Sowing and gleaning and rest,
Sorrow and mirth and a smile,
Glow in the East—in the West,
Day for a while.
Flowers to garland the earth,
Flowers to lay o'er the dead;
Tears and some sighs and some mirth,
Earth for a bed.
God gives His call to man
After a little span.

LOVERS

THE lover was sad, for his lady fair
Averted her violet eyes;
She drew away from his fond caress
And answered him with her sighs.

"Oh my lady fair," the lover cried,
"My love your true love won;
Why have you changed? Oh, tell me Love,
What have I said or done?"

Then his lady fair rose up in wrath,
"I beg you, sir, to leave;
I stood beneath the mulberry's shade
At this time yester-eve.

I saw you sit with another then
Where the lover's arbor charms,
You held her hand and kissed her there;
She clasped you in her arms."

Then the lover laughed and stretched his arms—
"My dear Love, come to me;
It was my mother whom I kissed
Beneath the mulberry tree."

THE CHRIST STAR

MYRIAD stars o'erhung the plains
Of Bethlehem that night;
But brighter far than all the rest,
One star flung out its light.
The brightness of that star proclaimed
The coming of the King;
And startled shepherds woke to hear
Angelic voices sing.

From out the East with precious gifts
Came wise men from afar,
To where with fullest glory shone
The radiance of that star.
"Here is the dwelling of the King!"
They cried, with gladsome shout;
And far above them through the night
The heavenly songs rang out.

Dear Lord, we bring our hearts to Thee—
Not frankincense or gold,
Such as that night, with holy joy,
The wise men brought of old.
Abide with us, O Heavenly Child,
Our Saviour, Master, Friend;
And to Thy name our songs shall rise
In praises without end.

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